

**SPEECH BY MR BOB TAN BENG HAI,
CHAIRMAN OF SBS TRANSIT LTD,
AT ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER
HELD ON 3RD NOVEMBER 2023 AT FAIRMONT SINGAPORE BALLROOM**

Mr Chee Hong Tat, Acting Minister for Transport

Your Excellency, Ms Minh-di Tang, French Ambassador to Singapore

MOT PS, Loh Ngai Seng

LTA Chairman, Alan Chan

PTC Chairman, Janet Ang

ES NTWU, Melvin Yong

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good evening and thank you for joining us all, this evening, to celebrate our Golden Jubilee.

2. SBST has come a long way since its humble beginnings, 50 years ago. It was a merger of three private bus companies to form Singapore Bus Service (SBS). The merger, as some of you may know was at the instigation of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew who had the vision of amalgamating all the private bus companies in Singapore with the aim of improving efficiency and commuter service. Today, we have gone one full circle and we now have 4 public bus operators in Singapore, although they are much more efficiently run under the oversight of the Land Transport Authority.

OUR BUS BUSINESS

3. In the early days, our pioneers worked with the Government to transform Singapore's public bus system, as mentioned by Minister Chee, but looking ahead we will continue to work closely with LTA, for example, we have plans to establish a new Bus Captain Training and Certification Centre. The new facility will include more training rooms and a new training circuit, will open our doors to train new Bus Captains for the industry. Working closely with LTA's Singapore Bus Academy, the centre will play an important role in helping to elevate bus driving proficiency, road safety, and service excellence.

OUR RAIL BUSINESS

5. In 2003, SBS changed its name to SBS Transit when it was awarded the Northeast rail Line (NEL) and two Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines.

6. Despite not having any prior experience in the Rail business, the pioneering team did an exceptional job in getting the service established. Today, we continue to operate these lines together with the Downtown Line (DTL) which was added in 2013. I am delighted that SBST continues to deliver safe and reliable service to commuters and is being recognised today, as having the most reliable Rail lines in Singapore. In fact, I'm told DTL holds the distinction of being the most reliable MRT line globally.

TECHNOLOGY

7. Every day, our extensive bus and rail network carries approximately three million passengers. In response to Minister's encouragement to stay mission focussed, we would like to assure the Minister that we actively seek out innovative solutions and employ technological advancements to elevate our service quality and operational excellence.

8. Just this year, we integrated the use of artificial intelligence (AI) into our operations. Introducing a robotic dog — known as kAI — into our trusty team of technicians, we leveraged the use of this innovative technology to enhance the maintenance and inspection processes at our depots. This will certainly help us to better detect potential faults early.

SUSTAINABILITY

9. In the area of sustainability, SBST recognises our role in the transition towards a low-carbon transport system in Singapore.

10. In the past five decades, we have continually incorporated green efforts into our operations. Starting from as early as 1993, we launched the iconic 'Superbus', known for its ozone-friendly features, we rolled out ASEAN's first environmentally friendly Euro 4 buses, was the first public bus operator to trial two hybrid electric buses in

Singapore, and today, we operate a fleet of electric powered trains, 31 fully electric buses, and 25 diesel-hybrid ones in partnership with the LTA.

11. Recent initiatives implemented to minimise our carbon footprint include harnessing reusable energy by installing solar panels at three of our premises which generate approximately 4,300 MWh annually — equivalent to the annual consumption of approximately 10,800 four-room HDB flats. Also, we have progressively introduced a bus condition monitoring system to enable real-time fault detection and prediction. These intelligent systems help to improve bus reliability, enhance fleet uptime, optimise parts replacements, and in turn, reduce waste. We're also exploring ways and means to reduce the consumption of water.

12. In the area of energy consumption, we are collaborating with Siemens Mobility to pilot an Artificial Intelligence-based software, known as the "Controlguide Airo", to help enhance the effective and efficient deployment of trains on the Downtown Line. By using data to predict passenger demand and provide decision support to modify train timetables, we hope to achieve up to 3,000 MWh of energy savings — equivalent to about one million dollars annually.

13. We are fully committed to reducing our carbon footprint and we are also working closely with LTA to transitioning to an entirely green fleet by 2040.

INCLUSIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

14. As a public transport operator, it is important for us to make public transport and community spaces, more inclusive and accessible to all commuters.

15. Some of our initiatives include SBS Transit's collaboration with SPD to launch the Travel Buddy programme which helps commuters with special needs travel confidently on public transport, and our partnership with Dementia Singapore to introduce the Find Your Way initiative to aid persons living with dementia in navigating bus interchanges and MRT stations independently. Earlier last month, in partnership with UK's Waymap, we launched Waymap-SG — a first-of-its-kind navigation app in Asia-Pacific - that generates turn-by-turn instructions with audio cues to help the visually impaired to get to their destinations.

OUR PEOPLE

16. Coming down to what makes SBST tick is our people. We employ some ten thousand employees and we see it as our responsibility to provide them with meaningful jobs and the opportunity to upgrade and progress in their career.

17. In 2022, we partnered with the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to offer a two-and-a-half-year work-study programme in Land Transport Engineering. This programme is offered to not only our current employees but also to aspiring individuals who are interested in joining the public transport sector. With the choice to specialise in either bus or rail engineering, individuals will engage in a four-day work week apprenticeship with our company and gain hands-on experience and practical insights on buses and trains. The collaborative endeavour reflects our commitment to nurturing skilled professionals in land transport engineering and growing a strong pipeline of skilled workers for the industry.

18. As mentioned by the Minister, we've also started embracing an inclusive workplace culture, enlarging our efforts to hire persons with disabilities. For now, we have 26 of them working in frontline positions such as station guides as well as in back-end support roles which include Customer Care, and we continue to hire more. We have renovated our premises, where necessary, to be more accessible and supportive of their needs. We are confident that they will be able to contribute meaningfully to the company and to the industry.

19. We are also conscious of the wellbeing of our staff — especially our older workers. To provide a safer work environment, we introduced an exoskeleton system at our train depots to minimise the physical strain associated with overhead fittings on the train undercarriage. The exoskeleton helps to support one's upper arms and neck and has been a gamechanger for our maintenance team.

20. The success of what we are able to achieve is the result of the hard work, commitment and teamwork of our people. To encourage and recognise their efforts and contributions in raising productivity, we worked with the Union leadership to launch the Productivity Incentive scheme. This scheme introduced in 2021 provides for

productivity savings to be shared with our employees. In 2021 and 2022, 100% of the savings were distributed to all our employees. This helped our employees to defray the higher cost of living and from the company's perspective, going forward, we will have to lower our cost base. So it is in fact a win-win situation for both the company, the employees, and especially for the Government that has to run public transport.

THANKING OUR STAKEHOLDERS

21. On this occasion, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our stakeholders for your support over the years.

22. Firstly, to the Ministry of Transport, the Public Transport Council and LTA for giving us the opportunity to serve our commuters every day. I often say to our employees that we are all public servants whose role is to help the government deliver the most efficient, the most reliable public transport service that all Singaporeans can be proud of. We have employees that have worked with us for so many years, with great dedication. One of them is Mr Teow Chue Hua, who has been with us for 53 years as a senior Bus Captain, and with that sort of loyalty and dedication, I think that we can be very proud of our public transport workers particularly those in SBST.

23. I would also like to thank the National Transport Workers' Union for working alongside us to care for the well-being of our workers and their development.

24. Thirdly, to our commuters for traveling with us, the media for covering us and our industry partners for the close collaboration over the years.

25. And last but not least, to our employees, both past and present — and especially our pioneers — thank you for your dedication, contribution, and tireless efforts that have made SBS Transit a name synonymous with safety and reliability. I would like to invite our pioneers to stand so that they can be recognised.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

26. As we mark this momentous occasion, let us celebrate not just the years gone by but also a future filled with new possibilities and opportunities. I have every confidence

that SBS Transit will continue to evolve and excel in providing world-class public transport service to the nation.

27. Thank you once again for joining us. Please enjoy the rest of the evening, and here's to the next 50 years of travelling together!